

Remembering a Legacy and Restoring Americanism

The 3rd Monday in January has been designated as the annual observance of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., honoring the memory and achievements of this most notable 20th century American civil rights leader. Dr King's powerful and compelling messages, such as his 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, D.C., furthered the cause of civil rights – not special rights, but equal rights – for all citizens. He urged the protestors of that time to not resort to violence and destructive acts. His dream envisioned a nation of unity and "a beautiful symphony of brotherhood", where all Americans had the opportunity to live out the self-evident truths expressed in the Declaration of Independence.

In more recent years, however, the Deep-Blue Left, particularly in our universities and the media, has ignored Dr. King's legacy, and instead encouraged class conflict, expanding and exaggerating the differences among the people of our country, for its own advantage. The brotherhood and the unity among Americans, which had been part of Dr. King's dream, and which President Trump, in his Inaugural Address, sought to reestablish, have been replaced with multiculturalism, globalism, the divisiveness of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, and generalized victimhood. What has been termed "identity politics" has become a significant force in our nation – and not for the better.

This is the critical situation that author and *Washington Free Beacon* editor-in-chief, Matthew Continetti, dealt with in an October 24, 2017, speech which was given at Hillsdale College, and printed in the November, 2017, issue of *Imprimis*. His concluding remarks can be instructive for all of us who love and respect this country, and see the need for restoring a real sense of Americanism:

*"The result of this class conflict is an America in danger of coming apart. ... What is more, the Left rejects the natural rights theory of the American Founding at the core of our tradition. What has traditionally held Americans together is the idea that each of us is made in the image of our Creator and endowed with certain unalienable rights. But **not only** that idea. We are also held together by the culture that emanates from the intermingling of dynamic peoples and unchanging principles. To combat identity politics, we must emphasize an American nationalism based on both a commitment to the ideals of the American Founding and a shared love of our national history and culture – a history and culture of individual freedom and religious pluralism, resistant to centralized authority and ever expanding into new frontiers and new possibilities.*

"The American people are united by our creed of freedom and equality, and also by our habits, our manners, our national language, our territorial integrity, our national symbols – such as the National Anthem, the Flag, and the Pledge of Allegiance – our civic traditions, and our national story. We should tell that story forthrightly and proudly; we should continue our traditions of local government and patriotic displays; we should guard the symbols of our heritage against attack; and we should recognize that the needs of our citizens take priority."

Priscilla Poese, Americanism Chair

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